



Idaho's Citizen Commission for Reapportionment

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Idaho Falls Public Hearing
June 15, 2011
2-4 pm
Idaho State University@Idaho Falls
Tingey Administration Building Auditorium

Chairman Frasure brought the meeting to order 2:04pm. He thanked everyone there for taking the time to come to the hearing. He also pointed out that there would be another hearing in Pocatello that evening. **Chairman Frasure** then had the commissioners introduce themselves as follows; **Commissioner George Moses** from Boise, **Commissioner Julie Kane** from Lapwai, **Commissioner Allen Andersen** from Pocatello, **Commissioner Evan Frasure** from Pocatello, **Commissioner Lorna Finman** from Northern Idaho and **Commissioner Lou Esposito** from Boise. Also present from the staff were **Keith Bybee** and **Cyd Gaudet**.

Chairman Frasure then asked **Commissioner Julie Kane** to go over some background on the laws and regulations that the commission must follow. **Commissioner Kane** explained that this process happens every 10 years to insure that the districts meet the 1 person= 1 vote criteria. The idea is to develop and create between 30 and 35 legislative districts, all evenly distributed to achieve one person= one vote, based on the updated census information. The Idaho Statutes also have some guidelines which the redistricting commission has to follow. Those guidelines include that to the maximum extent possible they shall preserve traditional neighborhoods and local communities of interest. If possible they shall try to avoid drawing oddly shaped districts. The commission also needs to avoid, as much as possible, dividing counties, and if counties are divided they need to be joined with adjacent counties and a highway needs to connect those counties. They should also attempt to preserve voting precinct lines and they cannot consider legislative incumbents nor can they consider protecting their respective parties.

Chairman Frasure then discussed that the ideal legislative district size 10 years ago was 36,970. He then pointed out that Idaho is one of the fastest growing states in the union as we have added 21% more people in the last decade. He explained that the ideal number in each district was now 44,788, so the commission must find 8,000 individuals to put into 35 separate districts. He stated that Idaho did not grow evenly, as some rural areas decreased in population and some urban areas grew in population. He likened the commission's job to putting together a jigsaw puzzle with pieces that don't fit very well. He also discussed that the commission can decide to decrease the number of districts down to 30. If they do that the target size for each district will be just about 54,000. He then explained that the commission is going around the state for public hearings as they want public input as to how to divide these districts. He also discussed the website and Maptitude, and explained that everyone is welcome to go on the website and draw maps and submit them to the commission. He also advised the audience that the commission will accept written testimony. He then advised that he would start calling names from the sign in sheet; however anyone not signed in was invited to testify.

The first called to testify was **Mr. Will Davis**. **Mr. Davis** is from Legislative District 33 and is planning on running for office. His suggestion was to add Shelly or Arco to his district to see if that would increase the Hispanic population in the district. He said that traditionally the cut off for his district was Hitt Road, and he suggested that it be moved to Woodruff, as that would give District 32 more room and divides population out more equally. **Chairman Frasure** then advised that one of the commission's guidelines is

that they are not to draw lines to protect incumbents or political parties. **Commissioner Kane** then asked **Mr. Davis** for a clarification asking if he was proposing that Hitt Road be a boundary between the districts. **Mr. Davis** clarified that he felt that by using 15 East as the dividing line it would give District 32 a little more space and give a better balance in each district.

Commissioner Moses then thanked Idaho Public Television for streaming the hearing and pointed out that in this way people at home can watch the proceedings.

Next called was **Ms. Jessica Lewis** from Bingham County. She pointed out that with the new census numbers Bingham County is now close to the target amount to be their own legislative district and she would like to see this happen. She stated that the people in the county are all very similar and connected in what they do, as most of the people live outside the cities. She said that the people from Bingham County that are in district 27 now feel left out. She stated that geographically there is no reason for the county to be split, and that economically it is costly for the county to administer elections when the county is split. **Ms. Lewis** then reminded the commission that Idaho Code asks that they not split a county, and they would like to stay together. **Commissioner Andersen** then asked what her position was on the Fort Hall Reservation. She answered that Fort Hall is currently in district 28; however the people there are associated with Blackfoot for shopping, etc. so it would be nice to keep them with Bingham County. **Chairman Frasure** explained that the commission will do what it can to keep as many counties whole as possible. He explained that the issue that got the commission in trouble last time was going over the 10% deviation. He stated that it appears the people in the Shelly area would have connections with Bonneville County. She agreed but stated that there is a lot of farming in Shelly and felt that tied them in more to Bingham County.

Representative Jim Marriott, from district 28, was next called to testify. He explained that he had come to the hearing to help him understand this process. He said that he was concerned as he had looked at several maps on the website that proposed cutting up Bingham County. He stated that looking at the map which the commission had on the wall, he felt that the population would allow them to pick up the portion of Bingham County that was now in district 27, and allow the county to be whole.

Next called was **Mr. Ladd Carter**, a County Commissioner who lives in Springfield, which is in Bingham County. He said he was speaking on behalf of the county and would request that the commission keep the county whole. He stated that the people in Aberdeen have always felt left out and would like the chance to be incorporated into one district within the county. **Chairman Frasure** advised **Mr. Carter** that the commission understands his point, but pointed out that the dilemma is where to put the extra people above and below where he lives.

Mr. Martinal from Ammon was next to testify. He stated that he had learned quite a bit in just the last few minutes and wanted to also urge the commission to keep the county together. He stated that each time there is an election he has to stop to see what district he is in because of the donut around Idaho Falls. He also requested that the dividing lines be straighter and something that people are more familiar with such as major roads. He then thanked the commission for their time and travel.

Next called was **Mr. Harry Rayclau**, **Mr. Rayclau** lives in Rigby, which is part of Jefferson County which he states is probably the biggest legislative district (District 35) in the United States as it encompasses several counties. He explained that this causes legislative candidates a lot of time, money, and effort to cover the entire district. However he didn't know if it was possible to reduce the size of the district due to the population. He also noted that district 31 goes down thru Eastern Bonneville, Caribou, Bear Lake and Franklin Counties, and explained that candidates have to travel out of state to get to all of these areas. He suggested that Teton County could somehow be included with Eastern Bonneville County or Freemont County, which would have more of a community of interest. He also explained that Jefferson County is the most populated county in district 35 as it is mostly a bedroom county for Idaho Falls and Rexburg. He pointed out that Clark, Butte, Custer and Lemhi Counties are also part of this district and they may have lost population. In closing he indicated that there are several areas in this part of state that the commission needs to address and rectify. **Chairman Frasure** indicated that his concerns are well noted; he reminded the audience that the commission is driven by population and that rural areas are a challenge. He also noted that the commission needs a super majority to divide a precinct. He further pointed out that there has to be a state road that connects a district, and as there is no road that connects Bonneville and Caribou counties they cannot put them together. **Mr. Rayclau** advised that he appreciates what the commission is doing. He thought that working from the ends of the State towards Boise would be a good approach to redistricting the legislative districts. **Commissioner Kane** then referred to comments which the commission heard in Boise and Canyon County from county clerks that precinct lines are pretty arbitrary and that they will be re-drawn based on what the commission does. She also reminded the group that the commission needs super majority to divide any precincts. She also explained that they have heard many comments asking that the district lines be recognizable such as major roads. **Mr. Rayclau** then indicated that the donut hole around Idaho Falls is a problem and that Bonneville County may need to be split with one district out by the INL, one in Idaho Falls, and one in Eastern Bonneville County. He also noted that he understands that the commission has a difficult job but he would at least like to see the counties kept whole. Specifically he mentioned district 35 and suggested that maybe they could add another county there, maybe let Custer County go and add Blaine or let Lemhi go and add Valley. In answer to a question **Mr. Rayclau** indicated that he had not yet been on the website or gotten into Maptitude but he has meant to. He was urged by **Commissioner Andersen** to go on and draw some maps and submit them.

Commissioner Moses then clarified that the commission has to work with the census data, which is different than the number of voters that the county clerks use to draw precinct boundaries. **Chairman Frasure** then pointed out that years ago the commission tried to keep cities together as much as possible, however the problem was that cities change constantly. He explained that some precincts run right through the middle of houses, and the clerks have had to find out where the master bedroom is to determine what precinct they are in. He did mention that the precinct lines in this area seem to be very clear.

Commissioner Andersen then reminded the audience that they have 90 days to put together their plan and requested any testimony or maps that they would like to submit. In answer to a question, **Chairman Frasure** indicated that the population data is on the website.

Next to testify was **Ms. Sharon Perry**, a City Council member from Idaho Falls. She advised the commission that she appreciates the time and efforts that they have put into this, and described their job as a rubix cube, tetris, and politics all together. Her main request was that the commissions consider the job that legislators have in completing their work and trying to represent people who live close and very far. She stated that District 31 creates an appalling job description for those legislators. She suggested that in order to ensure that everyone is best represented it would be nice to have the commission start from the outside of the state and then work inwards. She also indicated that it doesn't bother her to have larger cities divided but did not want to see small cities divided. She would also like to see legislators be able to do their jobs without travelling four hours back and forth to speak to constituents. She also asked about keeping precincts whole at which time **Chairman Frasure** indicated that it is not the commission's job not to make precincts. **Ms. Perry** indicated that she felt that the precincts should be left up to the counties as they know where roads and buildings are. She also commented that she did not have an opinion on reducing the number of districts.

Chairman Frasure then commented that the prior commission went through a number of lawsuits last time and received unfavorable rulings from the court. He indicated that this commission would like to be done by September and have a plan that they would feel comfortable in looking a judge in the eye and supporting.

Commissioner Kane then thanked the group for hosting the commission in Idaho Falls and congratulated them on their beautiful area. She also explained that the commission can decide between 30 and 35 districts. **Chairman Frasure** then indicated that this would give a range of 54,000 and 44,788 depending on the number of districts.

Commissioner Moses then discussed that previously he had worked for a legislator who had a very large district so he is familiar with the problems of that; however there are some things that the commission cannot change. He explained that we have a big state and a small population, and that the single standard that the commission cannot change is the equal number of population in each district. **Ms. Perry** stated that she understands this and is just asking for something reasonable as she does not believe that district 31 is reasonable.

Chairman Frasure advised that the commission heard from two prior commissioners, one of which said that the prior commission made a mistake by starting at the top of the state in drawing their lines, and admitted that district 31 was a terrible district.

Mr. Dennis Sutton from Idaho Falls, was next to testify. He explained that he is an outside sales representative in Eastern Idaho and knows the back corners of the area. He explained that the Wayans flats can't be crossed in winter, which bifurcates that area. He also indicated the two different agricultural spheres in the area because of the differences in growing season. He also indicated that Bear Lake is a part of the sphere for Pocatello, and that Teton County people gravitate towards Idaho Falls, and that the commission needs to pay attention to these economic spheres. These areas are largely controlled by drainages of the Snake River Plains. He indicated that although Custer may be close to Dubois on the map, they have to go thru Missoula to get to each other. He also indicated that the lava bed provides a complete break to the sphere of influence. He said that if you keep Aberdeen in the district they are now in they nearly need a translator to tell them what the people in Rupert are saying. He stated that he fully understands how difficult the commission's job is, but suggested that if they could start from a different point this time in drawing their districts then maybe a different part of the state would have the problems this time around. He also said that he likes the donut hole around Idaho Falls as downtown people have different concerns than rural people. He then thanked the commission for coming to town. **Commissioner Andersen** then indicated that there had not been much said about the school district boundaries and how they tie in. He asked for any thoughts on how the school districts influence how things operate within the city and the county. **Mr. Sutton** indicated that in Idaho Falls their school districts are laid out somewhat similar to the legislative districts and indicated if they were split there would be some dissonance, however that this is more of a local area challenge.

Chairman Frasure then asked if there was anyone else that wished to speak.

Ms. Rebecca Casper, from Idaho Falls, then came forward and indicated that it was her thought that the people who speak at hearings are interested parties; however the people who don't show up are the most important. She indicated that the Commission's efforts will affect the quality of representation in governments at all levels in our state for the next 10 years. She then gave some examples of this and explained that it was the commission's most important job to enfranchise as many people as possible. **Chairman Frasure** noted this is a refreshing perspective and that it is good to be reminded of the average citizen.

Next to testify was **Ms. Paula Herricks** from Jefferson County, district 35. She stated that she would like to see the commission keep 35 districts. She indicated that this was because if they reduced the number of districts, they would then need to add more counties to district 35. She stated that this would then make it more difficult for the elected officials to get around to these areas. She said that she feels that Idaho already has big enough geographic districts so would like to keep all 35 districts. **Chairman Frasure** then explained how there now has to be a state or federal road that connects counties within a district.

Commissioner Moses then discussed that in California their legislative districts are larger than their congressional districts. He then went on to explain that every place has its own issues and that with a limited number of people in some areas of the state there will be some large geographical districts. He then thanked everyone for coming, and indicated what an open process this is in Idaho and that 10 years ago Idaho won an award for this open process. He explained that this time the same software that the commission is using anyone can use online. He then challenged the group to go online and draw at least seven districts on a map to get a flavor of the process. He also pointed out that the commission will accept partial maps.

Chairman Frasure thanked everyone for their time and explained how to get onto the website. He explained that 97 plans were submitted last time, and that the commission hopes for more this time. He also encouraged the group to look at congressional districts, and indicated that this may be an easier assignment to draw a congressional district map, but did explain that the congressional districts need to be within about a 1,000 population size difference. **Commissioner Moses** explained that 60,000 people need to be move from Congressional District 1 to District 2.

Chairman Frasure then adjourned until 7:00pm in Pocatello.